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SUBJECT: TFGG01: MEDVEDEV'S LETTER ON RECOGNITION

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11. (C/NF) Text of Medvedev letter to Bush (Unofficial translation from the Russian)

PRESIDENT OF THE
RUSSIAN FEDERATION
August 26, 2008
No. 1765

Dear Mr. President,
Dear George:

In the spirit of the existing candid relations between us, I would like to inform you that the Russian Federation has found itself challenged by the necessity of taking a very difficult, but the only possible -- in the current situation -- decision about the recognition of the state sovereignty and independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

The aggression by the Mikhail Saakashvili regime against South Ossetia has swept away the lives of many of our citizens, including those of the Joint Peacekeeping forces fulfilling their peacekeeping mandate.

By issuing his offensive order to attack South Ossetia, Saakashvili hoped for a blitzkrieg so as to confront the world community with the established fact of a "settlement" of the Georgia-South Ossetia conflict, on Tbilisi's terms. At the same time he was preparing a military operation against Abkhazia. But his designs met resistance from the people of South Ossetia and Abkhazia and were stopped short by the resolute actions of the fortified contingent of the Russian peacekeepers.

Since the early 1990s, when the then President of Georgia, Zviad Gamsakhurdia, came out with the "Georgia for Georgians" motto, abolished the autonomous status of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and undertook an attack on Sukhum and Tskhinval, Russia has been doing the utmost to avoid genocide and ethnic cleansings. The Russian side, as a mediator and peacemaker, sought a political settlement of conflicts. We always proceeded from the principle of territorial integrity of Georgia.

However, the Georgian leadership systematically undermined the negotiating process, going back on earlier agreements and resorting to intricate political and military provocations, thus rudely violating the regime that was established in the conflict zones with the support of the United Nations and OSCE. Such behavior was accompanied by anti-Russia actions, assaults on peacekeepers, arrests of our officers, and the expulsion of Russian diplomats.

We would not give in to the provocations but showed endurance and patience; we undertook every effort to bring the Tbilisi regime to reason and back to negotiations. We did not give up our principled position even after the one-sided declaration of the independence of Kosovo.

Even so, Georgian leaders failed -- actually they never wanted -- to recognize our constructive approach, but instead they got more and more carried away by militarist ecstasy. Saakashvili's external patrons were playing an extremely destructive role, helping him "arm himself to the teeth" and actually encouraging him in his aggressive inclinations, and strengthening his feeling of impunity.

All our appeals urging Tbilisi to reach agreements with Abkhazia and South Ossetia on non-violence were rejected by the Georgian leadership and ignored by EU and NATO.

On the night of August 8, 2008, Tbilisi opted for war against the people of South Ossetia, whom, according to Saakashvili's affirmations, Tbilisi considers to be part of Georgia. By his offensive order unleashing the war, the Georgian president by his own hand has done away with all hopes for the restoration of the territorial integrity and for peaceful co-existence of South Ossetians, Abkhaz people, and Georgians within one state.

The people of Abkhazia and South Ossetia have repeatedly expressed in referenda their will in favor of the independence of their republics. What happened in South Ossetia and was planned to happen in Abkhazia is indeed the last straw. Recently, Presidents Sergey Bagapsh and Eduard Kokoyty, following the decision of their respective parliaments, have addressed Russian leadership with a request to recognize the state sovereignty of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The Federation Council and State Duma unanimously supported this request. This position is shared by the majority of our citizens.

In this context, taking into consideration the free will of the Abkhazia and South Ossetia's populations, and proceeding from the provisions of the UN Charter and those of the 1970 Declaration on the Principles of the International Law about friendly relations among nations, as well as of the Helsinki Final Act and other basic international documents, the Russian Federation has decided to recognize the independence of the Republic of Abkhazia and of the Republic of South Ossetia. I will sign corresponding decrees on August 26, 2008.

I rely on the correct understanding of this our move, which is inevitable in the face of Mikhail Saakashvili's aggressive actions.

We are aware of the efforts your Administration undertook to bring the Georgian leader to reason and to prevent the military adventures he had been repeatedly designing. Regrettably, as is evident, these efforts have not been sufficient. Mikhail Saakashvili has departed from under any control and by his actions is discrediting his close friends, who on many occasions used to help him out from the situations, which he himself created and for which no one else would be forgiven.

I hope that now Washington is fully aware of what the Saakashvili regime is like and about and that adequate measures would be undertaken against encouraging his anti-democratic militaristic instincts.

Respectfully,

D. Medvedev.

End text of Medvedev letter to Bush
BEYRLE